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ABSTRACT

The paper addresses identification of the young gifted child and explores research on the importance of early recognition and programs designed to meet the needs of gifted students. The history of gifted education and early childhood education is traced. Reasons for intervention, such as maximizing the potential of the gifted child, are pointed out. The author considers characteristics of the gifted and considers several methods for identification (parent nomination, teacher observation, formal testing, and informal testing). Several common instruments of measuring general intellectual ability and achievement in young children are examined, including the Stanford Binet IQ Test, the Wechsler Preschool and Primary Scale of Intelligence, and the Wide Range Achievement Test. Research on the process of creativity is cited. Finally, examples of various kinds of programs for young gifted children are described. (SBH)

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The Young Gifted Child: An Overview

by Laten Gray Bechtel

Introduction

One of the most often asked questions regarding identification of the gifted is, "Why should we spend time and effort to identify the young child who may be gifted?" Some critics regard attempts to identify the gifted child from ages three through six as a premature effort. In school systems where gifted programs exist, an arbitrary age is often established as the optimum time for identification. It is theorized since all children will reach this age at some point in time, the young gifted child will be identified when he "comes of age". Other critics of early identification maintain that because gifted children are so bright they will surface on their own and be duly recognized, making formal identification at any age unnecessary. Furthermore, there are those who contend that because the gifted are so superior in intelligence, they will be able to succeed in school and in society without any special help or special programs. Those who oppose special programs maintain the regular curricula is sufficient to meet the needs of the gifted student. They further suggest that the few exceptions who may require additional stimulation and challenges will find that internal motivation alone will suffice as a catalyst for satisfying the need for achievement.

Over the years, society has become conditioned to the premise that public education is designed for the average learner. Public concern and increased legislation have been instrumental in initiating programs for those students who function below average. However, there is a large group of students found at the opposite end of the educational spectrum who are as equally deserving of a similar type of public support. If the American public believes that all children should be provided for according to their specific educational needs, then gifted children

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are entitled to receive this benefit.

Efforts by advocates for the gifted and talented have created an awareness of these childrens' unique abilities. One extremely important area highlighted through awareness is recognition of the young gifted child. This paper will address the identification of the young gifted child, and will explore past and current research relevant to this topic, the importance of early recognition, and programs designed to meet the needs of this particular group. The identification and education of the young gifted child presents problems unique to this field. These problems originate in part from the fact that one is dealing with two distinct concepts: education of the gifted and education of the young. Both of these areas carry with them barriers to the full realization of successful programming for the young gifted child. In order to fully comprehend the present status of children in this category, one needs a working knowledge of the education of the gifted and an equal comprehension of education for the young.

Gifted Education

It has been stated that a society singles out and provides for that part of itself which benefits the state or ruling government (Henson, 1976). This concept has been applied to education for the gifted and was in practice as early as 350 B.C., when Plato recommended early identification of the gifted in order that they be separated from the masses and given specialized education. The Roman Empire continued isolating the gifted child and included military training in its education.

In more recent times, credit is given to Lewis Terman for the major contribution in helping to define and identify the gifted. In 1910, Terman revised the intelligence test developed by Alfred Binet, after which time it became the primary instrument for identifying these children. During the 1920s, programs for the gifted were found in many major cities. However, these programs, with their emphasis on the school-aged, white, middle-class child, were short-lived. Since the 1920s, the education of the gifted in the United States has undergone many changes based partly on the differing of opinions regarding identifying and isolating a group of children on the basis of superior intelligence. At various times the idea of selecting out and providing special programs for the most intelligent children, according to some set criteria, has met with considerable hostility. Many viewed it as "elitist" and undemocratic. Certainly, it was regarded as being in opposition to America's egalitarian concept.

After World War II, programs for the gifted went into a noticeable decline. The launching of the satellite "Sputnik" by Russia in 1957, helped leaders in America decide that the superior intellect of its citizens should be nurtured in

order to once again maintain its leadership among nations of the world. Thus, programs for the gifted began a new surge. However, like previous efforts, these were short-lived as the emphasis in the 1960s shifted to the disadvantaged and the impoverished.

In the 1970s and now into the 1980s, we are experiencing a renewed interest in the gifted. There are those who believe, at least in part, that the current interest is based on the ideals of humanistic concern and personal enlightenment. That is, the individual is valued for his self-worth and every effort should be taken to assure that the individual reaches his maximum potential.

It can be argued, however, that a major impetus for the renewed interest is a direct result of Public Law 94-230, Section 806(c)(1970), and the subsequent report "Education of the Gifted and Talented" published in 1972. Findings from these studies established the following facts: 1) education for the gifted and talented was a low priority item for most school systems, subsequently, 2) only a small percentage of the gifted and talented were being served across the nation.

It can be said, with some assurance, that education for the gifted and talented, at least in numbers, has made many gains since 1972. According to the Office of Education, only about 4% of the gifted were in any kind of special program in 1972. By 1978, this number has increased to 22% (Epstein, 1979). There are many areas which continue to need support and emphasis. One of these, most certainly, is that of the preschool gifted child.

Early Childhood Education

Early childhood education in the United States goes back to the establishment of the first private kindergarten in 1860 by Elizabeth Peabody. This was followed

by the first public kindergarten in 1873 established as part of the St. Louis Public Schools. However, it was not until after World War II that education for the young child began to emerge as an intricate part of the total education of an individual. Even though research has amassed a wealth of positive evidence substantiating the importance of early education, there are still those who view nursery schools and kindergartens as play situations with little or no educational value.

It is not surprising that it has taken so long to convince the general public of the importance of early education. According to Torrance (1976), many scholars in the past have denied the possibility that young children were even capable of thinking. I.E. Miller in his text, The Psychology of Thinking, published in 1909, discussed this problem in detail. He suggested that this error which has led to the tendency to minimize the child's power to think can be traced to the idea that thinking and reasoning are one in the same.

Even though it is now accepted that young children are certainly capable of thinking, it is recognized that a young child's thinking is different from that of an adult and actually varies accroding to the child's chronological and mental age.

Bloom's findings (1964) that a child's intelligence grows as much during the first four years of life as it will grow during the next thirteen, served as a major impetus for early education. Bloom concluded that the ages one through five were crucial in effecting intelligence from environmental factors with relatively little impact after age eight, hence the establishment of early intervention programs such as Head Start and Follow Through.

In 1967, after a study of the current status of early childhood education, Pines stated, "Millions of children are being irreparably damaged by our failure to stimulate them intellectually during their crucial years--from birth to six. Millions of others are being held back from their true potential" (p.1).

While it is recognized that the young child can think and learn, the field abounds with questions as to the best way to teach the young child and what the content of the curriculum should be. Elkind (1969) sees it as a "battle between the traditional, middle-class, nursery school teachers who see preschool education as developing from within and the new breed of preschool workers who see education as enforcement from without" (p. 322). In the extreme, it could be considered the difference between the opposing philosophies of enrichment or of direct instruction.

This conflict in philosophy has its basis in the notion that cognitive learning is a separate entity and is in no way related to play. This, of course, is a mistaken notion as those familiar with the young child realize the importance between cognitive learning and play. Play is the work of the young child and cognitive growth is an outcome. It is not and should not be considered an either/or situation.

Thus early childhood educators are responsible for planning programs which take into account the whole child in the learning process. They are faced with the concern of how to provide academic stimulation without academic pressure.

Early identification of a child's strengths and weaknesses is an aphorism that receives a great deal of lip service among educators but very little follow through, especially for the gifted and talented.

Intervention

There are several reasons to begin identification early. The most apparent is that early identification creates the opportunity for early intervention. Research stresses the need for early intervention in order to maximize the potential of the gifted child (Cox, 1926; Gallagher and Romshotham, 1977; Pressey, 1955).

For the young gifted child intervention often takes the form of acceleration. Gifted children, due to their superior abilities, maybe able to enter kindergarten or first grade at an earlier age. Acceleration, however, is one of the most debated areas in the field of gifted education even though there is considerable evidence attesting its positive values.

Reynolds (1962) reports that evidence is in favor of early entrance, both academically and socially. He concluded that entry up to twelve months early had been successful as well as beneficial for young gifted children. Furthermore, Reynolds, Birch and Tuseth (1962) in relation to early entrance, stated, "There are few issues in education on which the research evidence now available is so clear and so universally favorable to a particular solution" (p. 176).

Another study reported by Birch (1965) revealed that children admitted early to school on the basis of mental, physical, social and emotional readiness did as well academically as older students of equal ability in kindergarten, first and second grades.

Martinson (1971) reports a study in which gifted first grade students who had been placed in special programs were compared with equally gifted pupils who remained in regular classes. The students in special programs demonstrated an

average two academic years growth during a nine-month period, while the gifted child in regular classes gained only one year.

Similarly, Robinson, et al (1979) reports a study in which bright children were allowed to enter first grade early. Those students learned more during their first year of school than equally bright students who remained in kindergarten. They stated, "Superior abilities that are not nurtured will not develop and the resulting waste is inestimable" (p. 141).

Gifted and talented children, because of their superior intellect and abilities, often have needs very different from those of their age peers. Thus, it is necessary that each child be evaluated on the basis of his strengths and that he be given the opportunities and resources to reach a higher level of attainment than might otherwise be possible. This course of action has gained acceptance for other exceptionalities. However, for the most part, the same kind of reasoning is not applied to the needs of the gifted. This is attested to by the paucity of gifted programs, especially for the young child.

The young gifted child has special needs too. Foremost among these is a stimulating environment. This environment should help the child learn how to solve problems and make decisions. It should be one in which the young child can explore his ideas and understandings and arrive at new conclusions. It is a process during which time the young child is learning how to learn and obtaining the rewards associated with new insights. In some instances this kind of environment is provided at home. However, public education should also provide this atmosphere, which is so crucial to the continuing growth of cognitive and affective skills.

A second reason to begin identification early is to give the young gifted child greater opportunity to interact with other gifted youngsters. Labuda (1974) states "that since their ideals are advanced, gifted children sometimes do not fit into situations with others of their own age and find themselves marginal and isolated" (p. 5).

Research indicates it is essential that gifted children have a peer group with whom they can relate. Martinson (1961) found that within a large group of gifted students those at the kindergarten level exhibited more difficulty in peer relationships. Malone and Moonan (1975) emphasize this point in their statement that "provisions must be made to provide gifted children with a peer group as early as kindergarten" (p. 302).

If children's special abilities, as well as their basis needs, are not met at an early age, the effects for the individual can be far-reaching. Without the proper assessment and programming, a child with superior intellect runs the risk of either conforming to the established norm or becoming bored and withdrawing from participation. Both of these coping actions can prove disastrous for the individual.

It has been reported that adjustment problems for the gifted child can occur as early as kindergarten, becoming more evident by fourth grade. In 1972, it was stated "that approximately 50% of gifted children become 'mental' dropouts by around 10 years of age" (Marland). By 1980, it is hoped that increased awareness, knowledge and expansion of programs will have lowered that figure substantially.

Shaw and McCuen (1969) in tracing the development of underachievers among bright children, indicated that the tendency toward academic underachievement is

present when the underachiever enters school. Thus, gifted children must be challenged from the early years to prevent both personal and societal losses. Lehman's studies (1953) indicated the importance of early identification of creative abilities. He concluded that the best work in most areas of high achievement is accomplished before the age of thirty-five.

Other studies also indicate that many highly productive individuals who achieve success as adults were identified early in life and given the necessary nurturance for individual achievement (Cox, 1926; McCurdy, 1957).

Characteristics

When identifying any child as a member of a particular group, it is imperative to do so according to set criteria, such as a list of characteristics or a pattern of specific traits. This also applies to the gifted child.

There are lists available in literature which ascribe certain characteristics and/or expectations of behavior for those suspected of being gifted and talented (Abraham, 1976; Barbe, 1956; Hildreth, 1938).

But just as gifted children differ among themselves, the characteristics of the gifted are many and vary in combination from child to child. Therefore, it is quite difficult to project a sole profile of giftedness.

As far back as 1947, Terman & Oden cautioned against ascribing a pattern to the gifted child. Ogilive (1973), in a study of primary school children, found a wide range of differences among gifted children. He concluded that one must scrutinize carefully and individually to avoid the inherent danger of being misled by any list of traits.

However, it is believed that certain characteristics do occur more frequently than others among gifted and talented children at the preschool level. These have been identified by (Syphers, 1972; Terman, 1926; Witty, 1957), as the following:

1. Ability to read before entering school. (More than 18% in Terman's sample read before age 5, with a 5½% reading before age 4.)
2. Long attention span. (Able to sit for long periods at a project.)
3. Observant of their environment. (Curious and inquisitive.)
4. Early talking. (Tend to have larger vocabularies at an earlier age and use words correctly.)
5. Interest in calendars and clocks. (Tend to tell time earlier than their age peers.)
6. Early discovery of cause and effect relationships. (Look for the "why" of a situation.)
7. Early walking. (Appear well-coordinated.)
8. Tendency to prefer older playmates and adults (Ideas are farther advanced than those of their age peers.)

Rather than look for specific characteristics in order to identify giftedness, some authorities refer to an overall quality of functioning such as that described by Roeper (1977) who views giftedness as the "ability to think, generalize and to see connections and to use alternatives" (p. 389). Gallagher (1975) refers to this global quality as the ability "to use the symbol systems we have in our society at a much higher and more effective rate than other youngsters of the same age" (p. 30). Malone and Moonan (1975) differentiated the gifted child from the non-gifted child of the same age by "his ability to think in the abstract, to perceive cause and effect relationships and to project ideas into the future" (p. 302).

Newland (1976) states that gifted children are particularly capable of quick and generally accurate generalization (p. 14); that they appear more avid in seeking out learning opportunities; and that they have superior memories" (p. 16).

It can generally be said that gifted children learn more quickly and may, in fact, learn quite differently than those of lesser ability. In many instances, the gifted child appears to make great leaps in his learning. He does not need the step-by-step process that is typical in learning for most youngsters of the same age. These differences can be detected at a very early age among gifted children.

Identification

It is recognized by many authorities that identification of the gifted should begin early.

As early as 1942 Hollingworth advocated identifying the gifted child at a young age in order to promote optimum development.

Terman (1954) emphasized, "that both the evidence on early mental development of historical geniuses and that obtained by follow-up of gifted subjects selected in childhood by mental tests, point to the conclusion that capacity to achieve far beyond the average can be detected early in life by a well constructed ability test that is heavily weighted with the gifted factor" (p. 12).

Martinson (1975) stated that "If choices must be made, it is more economical to identify gifted children in the early grades. These children are in school longer, and the waste of underachievement can be avoided or at least reduced" (p. 2

Epstein (1979) says it succinctly, "Start early and use many methods" (p. 45).

The methods most commonly used to identify the young gifted child include the following:

- Parent nomination,
- Teacher observation,
- Formal testing, and
- Informal testing.

Parent Nomination:

Parents are crucial in the identification of superior abilities in their own children. For the most part, the young child has not been in a situation whereby recognition of his specific abilities could take place by a teacher. Parents have been with the child during the early developmental process. They are aware of his strengths as well as his weaknesses, and in fact, may be the most capable in judging their child's ability. Parents then can be considered a key factor in the identification process.

Parents have a better record for identifying giftedness in their young children than do teachers. Jacobs (1971) found that parents of a kindergarten group were able to identify 61% of their gifted children whereas teachers recognized only 4.3% of the same group.

It was reported by Ciha, et al., (1974) that parents were able to correctly nominate 67% of their gifted youngsters while teachers after studying characteristics of gifted children, nominated only 22% of those same youngsters.

Teacher Observation:

Gear (1976) found that training teachers in identifying the gifted increased their effectiveness in the process. Those who received training were far superior in their ability in identifying gifted children than were those who had not received any special training.

Malone (1974) recommends regular observation of the child in the classroom setting as the best for identifying the gifted child. This is a method which can be utilized by nursery school and kindergarten teachers. In view of the fact that

many teachers have rated poorly in this area in the past, and since many of these children are not in a formal school setting, this should not be considered the optimum identification method for the young child.

Teachers, in general, tend to be concerned for the average ch ild. The cirriculum and manner of teaching are directed to the norm of the class. Students who achieve above the norm and in accordance with the established behavior standards are considered outstanding students. These are the students who are often nominated by teachers as gifted.

Gifted individuals, in many instances, do not display traits that are compatible with teachers expectations. Hence, they are often overlooked in the identification process.

Formal Testing:

One of the most debated areas in the field of identification of the young gifted child has to do with formal testing. The testing of young children has generated many concerns among educators. Foremost among these concerns are welfare of the child; validity of the instruments; and reliability of results. Starkweather (1964) cites the following problems in relation to testing the young child:

1) Cooperation of the child. Young children often have problems in attending to the rigidity of formal testing.

2) Honesty of the experimenter. The young child must be approached with an open mind and at no time be forced to meet expectations of the experimenter.

3) Evaluation of responses. Adults have difficulty viewing the world the same as a young child. Care must be taken not to distort the meaning of the child's responses.

A lack of instruments appropriate to the preschool level of maturity further compounds the difficulty. Starkweather states that "one of the reasons for this is that, in the measurement of intellectual characteristics at the preschool level, many of the abilities identified in older children such as fluency, flexibility, originality and elaboration are not necessarily differentiated in early childhood" (p. 110).

According to Epstein (1979) follow-up of gifted students has revealed that tests given as early as six years of age were extremely good indicators of both present and future ability to achieve.

These positive predictions do not always necessarily hold true for the early preschool years. Intelligence tests administered during this period do not yield good estimates of a child's later academic achievement (Roedell, Jackson, Robinson, 1980). However, according to Sontag, Baker and Nelson (1958), the use of intelligence tests as long-term predictors does increase remarkably after the age of three.

In spite of the conflict of opinions, formal testing is being utilized to identify and evaluate superiod abilities in young children. Studies have shown that individual testing of gifted children is far more accurate than that of group testing (Martinson, 1961; Pegnato and Birch, 1959; Sheldon & Manolakes, 1954). Such studies indicate that group tests alone would have missed one-half of the students otherwise identified. Group tests which measure general intellectual ability are not appropriate for use with children of preschool age. The reasons are obvious; most preschool children are unable to attend and to apply themselves in a group testing situation.

Tests

Some of the most commonly used formal instruments that measure general intellectual ability and achievement among young children are:

- The Stanford-Binet IQ Test
- Wechsler Preschool & Primary Scale of Intelligence (WPPSI)
- Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (Revised, WISC-R)
- McCarthy Scales of Childrens' Ability
- Goodenough Draw-A-Man-Test
- Peabody Individual Achievement Test
- Wide Range Achievement Test

The Stanford-Binet (Form L-M, Terman and Merrill, 1973) is considered the most comprehensive instrument for assessing individual ability with the preschool child. It is a popular test due to its long history of use. It covers both the age and the performance ranges necessary for evaluating the ability of intellectually advanced young children. The content varies according to age. The types of tasks for the young child are primarily simple verbal, or sensor motor. A major disadvantage, however, is it must be administered by a highly trained individual.

The WPPSI (Wechsler, 1967) is a general intelligence test for children between the approximate ages of 4 to 7. The test consists of verbal and performance scales each having five subtests and must be administered by a highly trained person. The WPPSI was not standardized for administration to two and three-year old children and does not contain sufficiently challenging items to test the limits of bright preschoolers abilities. Thus, these two factors make it unpopular as an instrument for identifying very young children with superior intellectual abilities (Roedell), Jackson and Robinson, 1980).

Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (Revised) - WISC-R (Wechsler, 1974) has been found useful when a ceiling cannot be established on a WPPSI subtest.

The WISC-R was not standardized for use with children under the age of six years. However, it can be interpreted in terms of "test age" norms (Roedell, Jackson and Robinson, 1980). It also requires administration by a highly qualified individual.

The Peabody Individualized Achievement Test or PIAT (Dunn & Markwardt, 1970) measures a child's abilities and/or achievement in reading and mathematics. It is easy to administer and does not require extensive training. The subtests start as pre-academic levels affording every child the chance of success.

Wide Range Achievement Test of WRAT (Jastek, 1965) measures a child's achievement in the areas of reading and math. Level I begins at five years of age and extends to age 12. The WRAT correlates highly to the WISC and Stanford-Binet. It is easy to administer and does not require extensive training.

The McCarthy Scales of Children's Ability is designed for use with children between the ages of 2½ and 8. It has been found to yield scores that are sound predictors of school performance as well as to correspond to scores earned on the Stanford-Binet and WPPSI (Kaufman, 1973).

In order to earn a high score on the McCarthy Test, a child must perform consistently high on every subtest. Schorr and McClelland (1977) found in a study that even when children earned very high scores on some subtests, their overall McCarthy IQ's were much lower than their scores on the Stanford-Binet and WPPSI. It also needs to be administered by a highly trained person.

Goodenough Draw-A-Man-Test is a measure of intellectual maturity. Valid scoring requires practice, thus a trained psychologist is required. The requirement

that a child draw a person reflects his concepts which develop as a result of mental level, experience and knowledge (Tarczan, 1972). Harris (1963) stated that the test is only fairly (.60-.70) reliable in use with above-average intelligent children.

Informal Testing:

Informal testing is actually a very important part of the teacher's ongoing observational process. This aspect is especially important when dealing with young children who cannot take part in a formal testing situation due to immaturity or cultural differences. The teacher who is skillful in assessing children's abilities will be able to pick up very quickly on the young child's unique abilities.

Behavioral checklists can be utilized as a part of informal evaluation and are especially useful in nursery and kindergarten screenings. While checklists do not establish the fact of whether a child is gifted or not gifted, they do create an awareness among teachers of what to look for as indicators of giftedness.

Malone & Moonan (1974) report positive findings on their use of the Behavioral Identification of Giftedness Questionnaire (BIG) which works in conjunction with CHAROSEL (Moonan, 1973). The questionnaire, composed of 50 items, was found to be extremely useful in distinguishing the behavior of the gifted child from that of the non-gifted child. A short version of the questionnaire is suggested for use in kindergarten registration procedures.

An effective identification program for the young gifted child includes all of the aforementioned approaches. While formal testing is a crucial aspect of any identification program, there is no assurance that all gifted children will be

discovered by testing alone. In most instances actual testing time is very short. It is quite possible that the young child may not be functioning at his optimum level during the testing procedure. If identification rests heavily on formal testing, many young children may go unrecognized.

At the preschool level, Jackson and Robinson (1977) recommend that children be given several opportunities to display their intellectual and creative gifts.

Creativity

It is difficult to discuss characteristics of the gifted child without considering the process of creativity. The relationship of giftedness and creativity has generated much research and commentary.

Many researchers have found a relationship between intelligence and creativity. However, there is a wide interpretation of the relationship based on differences in definition; of what constitutes creativity and the different manifestations it may take.

Torrance (1976) defines creativity as the process of sensing problems or gaps in information, forming ideas or hypotheses, testing and modifying these hypotheses, and communicating the results.

According to Wallace and Kogon (1965) creativity is the ability to generate or produce within some criterion of relevance many cognitive associates and many that are unique.

Khatena views originality as the power of the imagination to break away from perceptual set so as to restructure anew ideas, thoughts and feelings into novel and meaningful associative bonds (Khatena and Torrance, 1973).

The highly creative person is considered by experts to have at least above average intelligence. The highly intelligent person is considered to possess a fair amount of creativity (Epstein, 1979).

The child who is gifted with creativity often exhibits traits quite different from the highly intelligent child. According to Torrance (1976) the high intelligent but less creative child tends to be more of a conformist and seeks the approval of others. These are the "convergent thinkers" who strive for the "right" answer. On the other hand, the highly creative child is more apt to be the nonconformist and is less concerned with authority or organization. Such a child is a "divergent thinker" who looks for several solutions or possibilities when solving a problem.

Research indicates that creativity can be nurtured and increased by teachers in conducive environments (Guilford, 1975; Maloney, 1974; Passow, 1977).

If we accept the premise that young children are naturally creative, then early childhood programs are prime areas for the nurturance of creativity. However, according to Torrance (1969) creativity drops when children reach four or five years of age. This drop may be more cultural than natural. Research indicates the drop may be due to school entrance and the demands for conformity confronted by the child within the formal school setting.

Maslow holds the view that creativity results from mental health. According to Gowan, in order to increase creativity more time should be spent in "strengthening the mental health of children" (p. 472).

In order to fu-ly nurture the creative abilities of all young children, more attention needs to be directed to the total curriculum needs for early childhood education.

Programs

The following are examples of various kinds of programs for the young gifted child which appear in current literature. It is by no means complete in number or description. For a more comprehensive review of programs, see A Resource Guide to Preschool and Primary Programs for the Gifted and Talented by Reva C.W. Jenkins.

Two programs for young gifted children which are reported widely in the literature at this time are the Astor Program for Pre-Kindergarten through Primary Grades in the New York City Public Schools and the Child Development Preschool at the University of Washington in Seattle.

The Astor Program (Ehrlich, 1979) in operation since 1974, is designed for children of exceptional intellectual ability beginning at the age of four. It was found that the students made significant gains in word knowledge, total reading and total math, not only in growth over a one-year period, but also in comparison with a national norming population of high achievers.

The Seattle Program is the first large scale longitudinal study of children with advanced intellectual abilities who have been identified during their preschool years. The program emphasizes the concept of allowing children to progress at their own rate. Over the years the study will answer relevant questions pertaining to the level and pattern of children's intellectual and academic abilities (Robinson, et.al., 1978).

Research points out that parents participating in programs for the young gifted child can have positive effects both for children and parents.

Rockford Public Schools in Illinois began their program with city wide registration and pre-kindergarten screening in 1975. In the program, called P.A.L.S.

(Potentially Able Learners), children are involved in a classroom environment while parents are involved in a discussion/work group with a psychologist (Bauer and Harris, 1979).

The Saturday Workshop sponsored by the Gifted Child Society, Inc. offers a wide variety of special interests for gifted children beginning at the preschool level. In addition, the society conducts parent discussion groups (Ginsberg, 1976). This kind of approach is profitable for both children and parents. It brings the gifted child in close contact with other gifted individuals in a stimulating environment. Equally as important, it affords parents an opportunity to share thoughts and problems unique to their children.

Some programs focus on the teachers as well as the children. Cassidy and Vukelich (1978) report on a three-week pilot program for gifted pre-first grade children and teachers. The teachers were given a course which focused on identification and education of gifted children. It was concluded that the program was equally beneficial for teachers and children. It helped teachers acquire a better understanding of academically talented children as well as stimulated the young child's learning.

Nolte (1976) reports an early entrance program in Watertown, Wisconsin. Operated as Project Bright under Title III ESEA, the program provides for early entrance in kindergarten before the age of four for bright children. Some students may complete only one-half of kindergarten and one-half of first grade before going to to second grade. It has been found that these children display an advanced aptitude for reading and writing.

The programs previously outlined are examples of recently established programs for the young gifted children, most of which are short-term.

In contrast, the Hunter College Elementary School located on the campus of Hunter College in New York City is one of the oldest of the traditional programs for gifted children. Children are accepted in the program at three and a half years of age (Mancini, 1977).

Roeper School, a well-known private school for gifted children located in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, accepts children into its program at three years of age. The program stresses humanistic education through an open classroom approach (Roedell, Jackson and Robinson, 1980).

The Bureau of Education for the Handicapped (BEH) has been instrumental in sponsoring programs which focus on the young gifted handicapped child.

One such program was the Chapel Hill Services to the Gifted Handicapped. Funded in 1975, the program served the needs of gifted handicapped preschoolers. So often gifted-handicapped preschoolers are in programs which are concerned foremost with the handicapping conditions. The aim of the Chapel Hill project was to stimulate the child's full potential by emphasizing what he can do. The program also required that parents be an integral part in the child's school experiences (Green, Malley-Crist, Cansler, 1978).

The Institute for Child Behavior and Development at the University of Illinois, also sponsored by BEH, has developed a program referred to as "Retrieval and Acceleration of Promising Young Handicapped and Talented" (RAPYHT) for children ages three through five. The program serves young nonhandicapped gifted children as well as those who are handicapped. Karnes (1978) states that the program is "committed to the premise that the earlier we identify and program for talents, the greater that chances that the child will fully develop his true potential" (p. 5).

In 1976 the Panhandle Child Development Association in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho received a grant from the Office of the Gifted and Talented to establish a model preschool for gifted and talented children serving both the handicapped and non-handicapped. Results indicate that giftedness can be identified in preschool and appropriate experiences can be designed to meet each child's unique needs. An important aspect of this program is parental involvement--particularly crucial since most of the population involved is rural (Epstein, 1979).

Conclusion

It is apparent that many strides have been made in gifted and talented education over the past 20 years. Unquestionably, much more is needed, especially in the area of the young gifted child.

Historically, early childhood education programs have lagged behind those for older children. There continues to be a subtle prevailing notion that education for the young child is "frills." It appears that these programs are "tacked on" after the main objectives of the education program have been met.

If this mind set continues, appropriate education for the young gifted child is a long way from fruition.

According to Grossi (1980) in a recent survey and analysis of state policy for the gifted and talented, only eighteen states have adopted a mandatory legislative approach to gifted and talented education. Grossi notes, "while the growth in gifted and talented programs is not solely dependent on legislation, a mandatory law has certain advantages" (p. 3).

If we believe as Thompson (1972), "that a special gift is not something given in the literal sense of the word, but something that an individual creates in himself

through continued exploration of opportunities" (p. 40), then early identification and intervention are essential. Clearly, the earlier a child is identified, the greater chance that child will have to explore, to experience and to develop his potential for future achievement.

Figures are unavailable at this time as to the actual number of preschool and kindergarten children in programs for the gifted. However, from the available literature, it is inferred that the number of young children identified as gifted and talented and served by appropriate programs are extremely low in proportion to their actual numbers in the total United States population.

According to U.S. Bureau of the Census statistics in 1978, 4,874,000 three, four and five year-old children were enrolled in preschool and kindergarten programs. This is approximately one-half of the total United States population of three, four and five year-olds. If a conservative 3% of those currently enrolled in nursery and kindergarten were estimated to be gifted, approximately 146,220 would be eligible for early childhood gifted and talented programs. The number of these children actually enrolled in speical programs for the gifted is unknown; however, it can certainly be deduced that their prevalence in such programs falls considerably short in proportion to their numbers in the population.

Education Research Services (1975) in outlining 18 programs for the gifted, found only four which offered any differentiated programming for the kindergarten child. Only one of eighteen programs provided any special services for the pre-kindergarten child. In many of the programs differentiated programming consisted of one or two extra teachers to serve the entire spectrum of gifted students.

Jenkins (1977), in a survey of preschool and primary programs, reported that of the 113 programs which responded, approximately 15 served the preschool population and only 8 served the preschool or kindergarten population exclusively.

In the past, the gifted have contributed overwhelmingly to our society and continue to do so. Certainly, the fear by a few of an "elitist group" is not a strong enough argument for closing our eyes to the superior abilities of a minority of our population. However, our society's decision making regarding the gifted should not be governed by what they may be able to do for the good of the country. While this has been a strong impetus in the past for gifted programs, it is far from an ideal motivation.

Hopefully, our American educational community has come to view each child as an individual and is attuned to his needs and potential. In identifying the young gifted child, as in other exceptionalities, the major objective should be centered on the realization of personal potential, no matter what the level.

Undeniably, many young children have been neglected in the area of intellectual stimulation, not only in the home, but also in early school experiences. It is asserted that an increase in rich and varied experiences for young children is of prime importance in strengthening learning and maximizing intelligence. If we believe as Hunt (1961) that intelligence is not fixed and a child's potential for change in any direction is limitless, then it is up to the educational system to do everything possible to assure that movement is in the positive direction.

Why have special programs for the young gifted child? Ability at any level needs recognition and nurturance if successful human achievement and fulfillment is to be ultimately attained.

Programs

Astar Program
Virginia Z. Ehrlich
Gifted Child Studies
Board of Education of New York
40 Seventh Avenue South
New York, New York 10014

Chapel Hill Gifted-Handicapped Project
Joy Greene
University of North Carolina
Chapel Hill, North Carolina 27514

Child Development Preschool
Halbert B. Robinson
Washington University
Seattle, Washington 98195

Hunter College Elementary School
Hunter College
New York, New York 10029

Institute for Child Behavior and Development
University of Illinois
805 West Pennsylvania Avenue
Urbana, Illinois 61801

P.A.L.S.
Charlotte Hoffman
Gifted Department
Rockford Public Schools
Rockford, Illinois

Project Bright
104 N. First Street
Watertown, Wisconsin 53094

Roeper School
Annemarie Roeper
2190 N. Woodward
Bloomfield, Michigan 48013

Saturday Workshop
Gina Ginsberg
Gifted Child Society, Inc.
P.O. Box 120
Oakland, New Jersey 07436

Panhandle Child Development Association
Gail Hanninen
Coeur d'Alene, Idaho 83814

Pilot Program for Teachers and Children
Jack Cassidy
New School District
Newark, Delaware

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